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LETTER DATED 9 MARCH 1998 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF GEORGIA TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

One more provocative action of the Abkhaz leadership compels me to appeal to you, in your capacity as President of the Security Council, and to request the Council's prompt reaction to the latest developments in Abkhazia, Georgia.

On 14 March 1998, the leadership of the Abkhaz separatists intends to hold the so-called elections to the "local self-governing bodies", which is nothing but just another attempt to stall the peace negotiations and is fraught with grave consequences for the peace process as a whole.

As you are aware, continued efforts of the United Nations, the Security Council and the personal commitment of the Secretary-General as well as his Special Representative to the comprehensive settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, have finally yielded a certain degree of progress in the peace process, including the enhanced role of the United Nations and the more active involvement of the Friends of the Secretary-General in the Geneva process, not to mention the resumed direct dialogue between the parties.

The unilateral decision of the separatists to hold the elections clearly demonstrates that the masterminds of this entirely illegitimate action are unhampered by morality or law, given the fact that the elections are planned at a time when two thirds of the native population of Abkhazia has been forcibly expelled from their homes and are certainly deprived of the right of participation.

We strongly believe that the Security Council will consider seriously the provocative intention of the Abkhaz side by severely denouncing this action and will once more make clear that the international community will not tolerate any attempt to undermine the territorial integrity of my country.

I am enjoined to transmit herewith the text of the statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia in this regard, and hope for your kind

assistance in having the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Peter CHKHEIDZE
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

Annex

Statement of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia, issued on 9 March 1998

On 14 March 1998, the leadership of the Abkhaz separatists intends to hold the so-called elections to the "local self-governing bodies".

At a time when two thirds of the native Abkhazian population, predominantly of Georgian nationality, has been forcibly expelled from their homes and are deprived of the right to participate in the elections, the above action is nothing but a provocation and an attempt on the part of the Abkhaz side to baffle the comprehensive settlement of the conflict.

The so-called elections to the "local self-governing bodies" are just another illegitimate action and, together with the similar "Parliamentary" elections of 23 November 1996, constitutes an attempt to create a false image of Abkhaz independence and to legitimize the present demographic situation created as a result of ethnic cleansing.

The attempt to carry out this provocative action flagrantly ignores the requirements set by the numerous resolutions of the Security Council, the Memorandum of the Heads of State issued at Almaty on 10 February 1995, the Minsk Statement of 26 May 1995 and the decisions of the Heads of State of 19 January and of 28 March 1997.

All this is taking place at a time when, as a result of the goodwill of the Government of Georgia and its commitment to the peaceful settlement of the conflict, certain progress has been evidenced in the peace process, namely, direct negotiations have resumed between the parties and the efforts of the United Nations, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and those of the Friends of the Secretary-General on Georgia, together with the Russian Federation as facilitator, have added a new impetus to the Geneva process. A number of countries have expressed readiness to increase their peace efforts.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia is compelled to remind the Abkhaz leadership that, in accordance with the 10 March 1994 and 17 April 1996 decisions of the Parliament of Georgia, the so-called Constitution adopted by the separatists, as well as other acts, treaties and agreements concluded with the subjects of law of foreign countries, are legally null and void as of their conclusion. Proceeding from this understanding, any elections held by the separatists in the territory of Abkhazia, Georgia, and all related legal acts are considered illegitimate.

The Government of Georgia believes that the holding of lawful elections in Abkhazia, Georgia, could be possible, only provided that the principle of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Georgia is fully adhered to and the rights of refugees and internally displaced persons to participate in such elections are guaranteed.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia appeals to the United Nations, to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, to other international organizations, as well as to the Commonwealth of Independent States and to all friendly nations to denounce this repeated attempt of the Abkhaz separatists to hinder the peaceful settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Georgia expresses confidence that, despite any attempt by destructive forces, the problem of Abkhazia, Georgia, will be resolved for the sake of the cause of peace and stability in the Caucasus and for the well-being of the population of Abkhazia and of the people of Georgia as a whole.